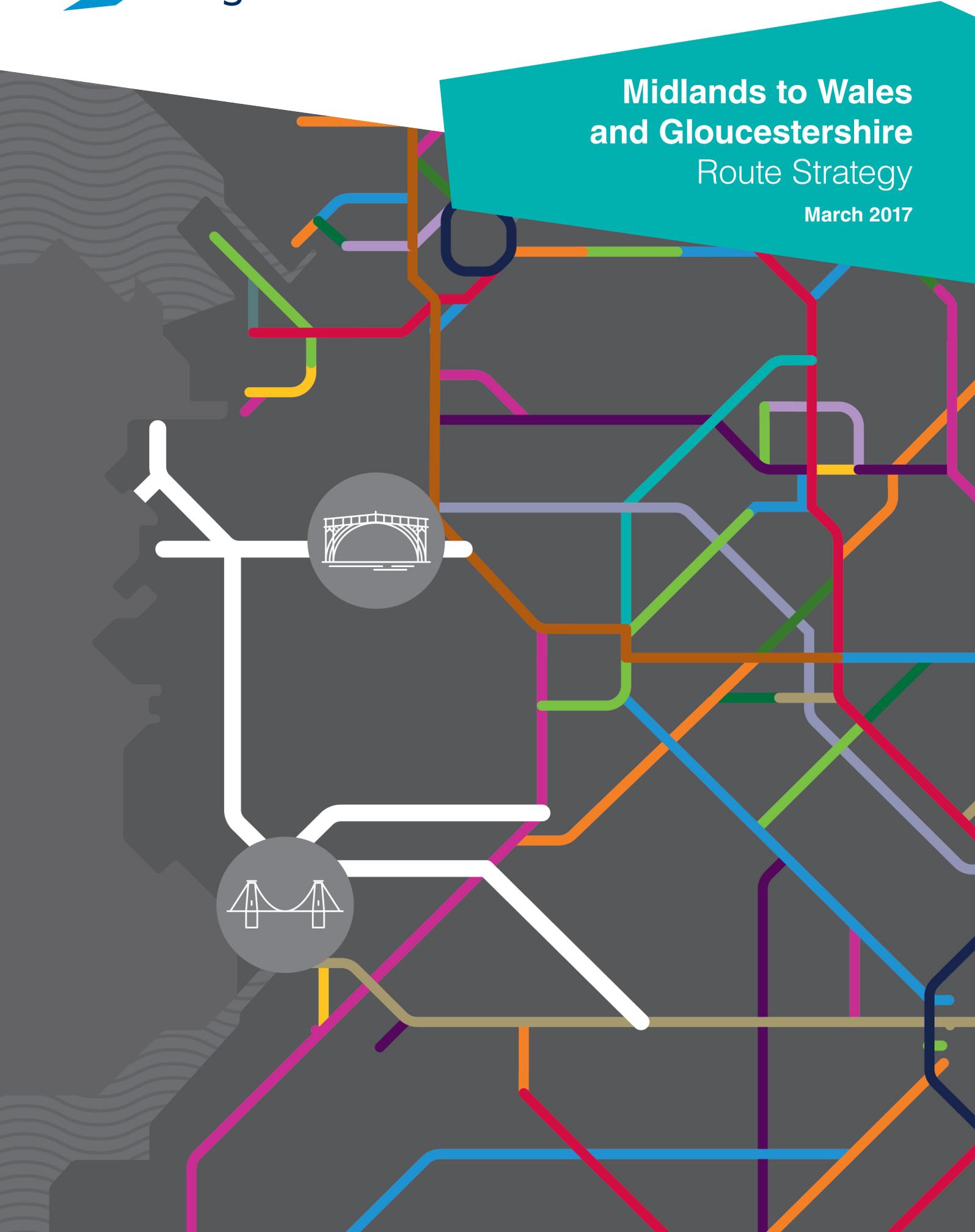


**Midlands to Wales
and Gloucestershire**
Route Strategy

March 2017



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Route strategies

The division of routes for the programme of route strategies on the Strategic Road Network

- London to Scotland East
- London Orbital and M23 to Gatwick
- London to Scotland West
- London to Wales
- Felixstowe to Midlands
- Solent to Midlands
- M25 to Solent (A3 and M3)
- Kent Corridor to M25 (M2 and M20)
- South Coast Central
- Birmingham to Exeter
- South West Peninsula
- London to Leeds (East)
- East of England
- South Pennines
- North Pennines
- Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire
- North and East Midlands
- South Midlands



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1. Introduction

The modernisation of England's motorways and major A roads, also known as the strategic road network (SRN), is making a vital contribution to economic wellbeing and growth. This Route Strategy – one of 18 such reports – provides a statement on the current performance of, and perceived pressures on, the Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire route to inform the planning of future investment.

The SRN supports national and local economic prosperity by:

- linking together major cities
- connecting with extensive local road networks
- providing links to major ports, airports, and rail terminals
- enabling good access to regions and cross-border routes between the nations of the United Kingdom

The establishment of Highways England through the Infrastructure Act 2015 has changed fundamentally the way we plan investment in the network. Funding is now determined every 5 years, in the [Road Investment Strategy \(RIS\)](#), which is set by Government. We are currently delivering on the commitments that were set out in the first RIS covering 2015 to 2020, which are already making a difference for road users across the network.

At the same time, we are working closely with the other 3 bodies with statutory responsibility for the RIS – Department for Transport, Office of Rail and Road and Transport Focus – on preparing for the next RIS (RIS2) for the period after 2020.





Purpose of Route Strategies

Route Strategies provide a high level view of the current performance of the SRN as well as issues perceived by our stakeholders that affect the network. They are one of the key components of research required for developing the RIS. This suite of Route Strategies builds upon the analysis underpinning the first set of Route Strategies undertaken between 2013 to 2015, which together provided the first comprehensive assessment of the entire network. This time the Route Strategies aim to:

- bring together information from key partners, motorists, local communities, construction partners, environmental groups and across the business
- achieve a better understanding of the condition and performance of our roads, and local and regional aspirations
- shape our investment priorities to improve the service for road users and support a growing economy
- help inform the next RIS¹

Strategic themes

The Government’s vision for transforming the SRN is described in the [Road Investment Strategy post 2020: Planning Ahead](#) document available on www.gov.uk. This vision builds on the 5 broad aims published in the [Road Investment Strategy for 2015-2020](#): economy; network capability; integration; safety; and the environment. It also builds on Highways England’s 5 strategic outcomes (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Using the evidence from this and the other 17 Route Strategies, we will develop proposals that can help bring the Government’s vision for roads to life.

RIS1 Strategic Vision as reiterated in “RIS Post 2020: Planning ahead”



Figure 1.1 - RIS1 strategic vision

Highways England Strategic Business Plan’s key outcomes



Figure 1.2 - Highways England strategic outcomes

¹See Chapter 6 for more information on the next RIS



Stakeholder engagement

Building on the engagement we started in the first round of Route Strategies, we have continued to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders to enhance our understanding of the strategic road network, and identify where users and other stakeholders feel investment is needed.

We used a number of methods to collate information. For example, we launched an online tool for customers and stakeholders over the summer of 2016 to inform us of the issues and challenges on our roads that affected them. As well as information collated from a range of people within Highways England, more than 300 different stakeholder organisations provided important feedback on the network during the evidence collection period. There were also more than 370 individual members of the public who contributed information. In total, around 2,700 individual points were raised by external stakeholders.

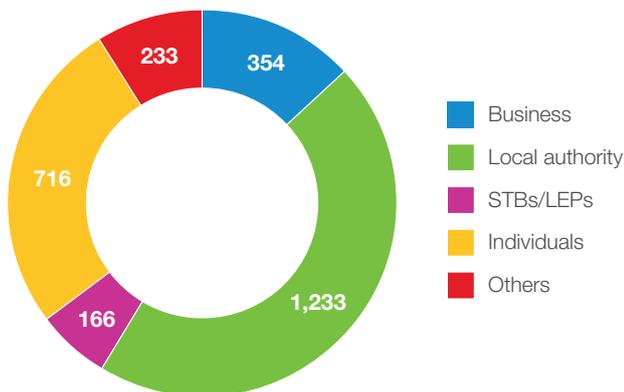


Figure 1.3 - External stakeholder responses

We are increasingly working with subnational transport bodies (STBs), including Midlands Connect, England’s Economic Heartland and Transport for the North, so we can ensure that their developing strategies and planning are integrated into our thinking (and vice versa).

Transport Focus

We commissioned Transport Focus, the road user watchdog, to undertake research on road user priorities. More than 4,400 interviews were undertaken with drivers across the SRN. Figure 1.4 below shows the breakdown by user type and purpose.

Completed interviews		
	3,487	79%
	322	7%
	407	9%
	206	5%
Commuting	501	11%
Business	1,367	31%
Leisure	2,457	56%

Figure 1.4 - Driver sample breakdown

250 fleet managers from a mix of industries, size and regions

The research found that the Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire route was one of the highest rated of the routes, with 80% of users rating their experience of the motorway sections as either extremely good or fairly good, and 67% giving the same rating to the A road sections, which form most of the route. As Table 1.1 shows, 32% of users still experienced problems using the route, with congestion and then high volume of traffic/roadworks jointly cited as the two main causes.

The full report has been published on Transport Focus’s website www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/road-to-the-future.

We will continue to work closely with Transport Focus to understand customer priorities to ensure that the next RIS reflects their needs.

Experienced problems %	Route impacted	Largest problem	Second largest problem
61%	M25 to Solent		
58%	London Orbital and M23 to Gatwick		
50%	South Coast Central		
46%	Solent to Midlands		
44%	East of England		
43%	Birmingham to Exeter		
41%	South West Peninsula		
41%	North and East Midlands		
40%	London to Scotland East		
40%	South Pennines		
39%	Kent Corridor to M25		
37%	London to Scotland West		
32%	Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire		 
30%	Felixstowe to Midlands		
30%	South Midlands		
28%	London to Leeds East		
27%	London to Wales		
17%	North Pennines		

 Congestion/traffic queuing
  Roadworks
  Delays caused by accidents/roads closed
  Roads busy/high volume of traffic

Table 1.1 - Transport Focus summary

2. The route

The Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire route provides important east–west transport links between England and Wales while the A49 connects these 2 corridors providing a north–south link through the Welsh Marches parallel to the Welsh border.

The route is comprised mostly of trunk roads with 2 complete motorways, the M54 and M50. Strategic links from Herefordshire and Gloucestershire include the A40 into Wales and the A417/A419 to the south. The A5/A483/A458 roads in the north provide key access routes from the A49 and M54 into Wales.

The route predominantly consists of A roads, which are mostly single carriageways with numerous side road junctions and at-grade roundabouts that provide local access to towns and villages. It also includes 2 motorways, the M50 towards the southern end of the route, and the M54 in the north. These motorways play an important role supporting transport movements between the Midlands and Wales. The route also provides transport corridors between south Gloucestershire, Birmingham and Wales, linking several towns and cities including Gloucester, Ross-on-Wye, Hereford, Leominster and Shrewsbury.

The northern section of the route includes stretches of the A5, A458 and A483, which provide an important strategic link between mid Wales, Shropshire and the West Midlands. This supports local traffic and employment journeys across Shropshire, in addition to providing an important tourist and leisure route to mid and north Wales by carrying high volumes of seasonal traffic. The A5 is also an important road for freight traffic from the Midlands accessing Holyhead port in north Wales.

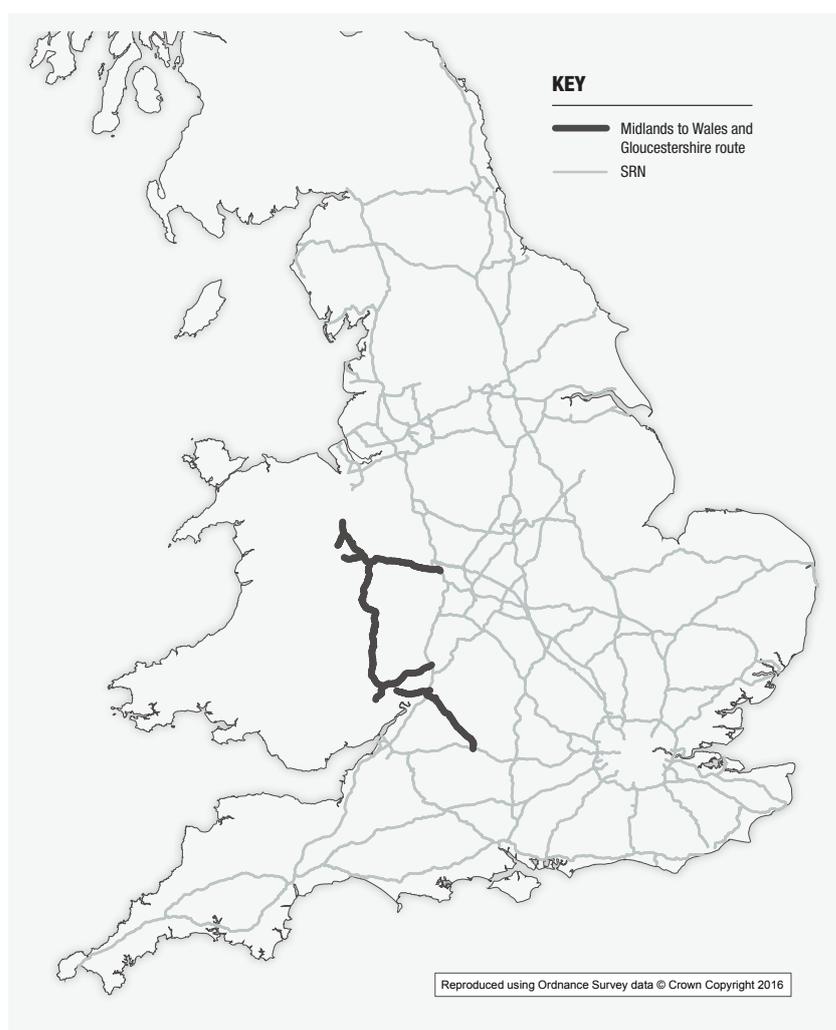


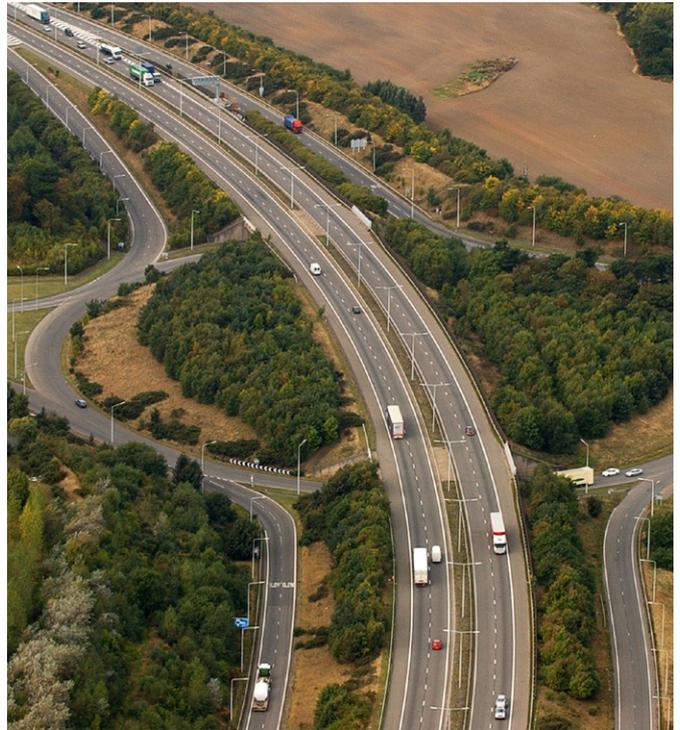
Figure 2.1 - Route overview map

The A49 connects the English and Welsh borders and south Wales to Herefordshire and Shropshire, and then on to Cheshire and north Wales via the A5, A458 and A483. The A49 is an alternative north–south corridor to the longer motorway route via the M50, M5 and M6 motorways. While the majority of traffic using the A49 make local and inter-regional trips, there are still significant long-distance traffic flows.

To the south of the M50, the A40 provides an additional east–west corridor between Wales and Gloucester. East of Gloucester, the route is linked by the A417 and A419 to Swindon and the M4 and the south-east.

The A40 is used for both long-distance travel and commuter trips between Ross-on-Wye, Gloucester and Cheltenham. This route is the first crossing point of the River Severn north of Bristol and an attractive route to those travelling into Wales via the M4 toll crossing. The western stretch of the A40 is largely rural, whereas the eastern section near Gloucester is more urbanised and therefore has a greater proportion of short local journeys, in addition to longer-distance strategic traffic. North of Gloucester, where the A40 forms a bypass of the city, are the only sections that are dual carriageway.

The A417 provides a link from Gloucester to Cirencester, where it connects to the A419, which continues to the M4 Junction 15 at Swindon. This is an alternative, shorter route for traffic travelling from mid Wales and parts of the Midlands in order to access London and the south of England. The majority of the A417 and A419 is dual carriageway, apart from the section around Birdlip, which is single carriageway with at-grade junctions. The A417 and A419 trunk roads provide an important link between the M5 and M4 motorways. It forms a strategic corridor of predominantly dual carriageway between the Midlands and the north and the south of England. This section of the route is maintained and operated on behalf of Highways England as part of the private finance initiative under a design, build, finance and operate (DBFO) contract.



“

The A417 and A419 trunk roads provide an important link between the M5 and M4 motorways.

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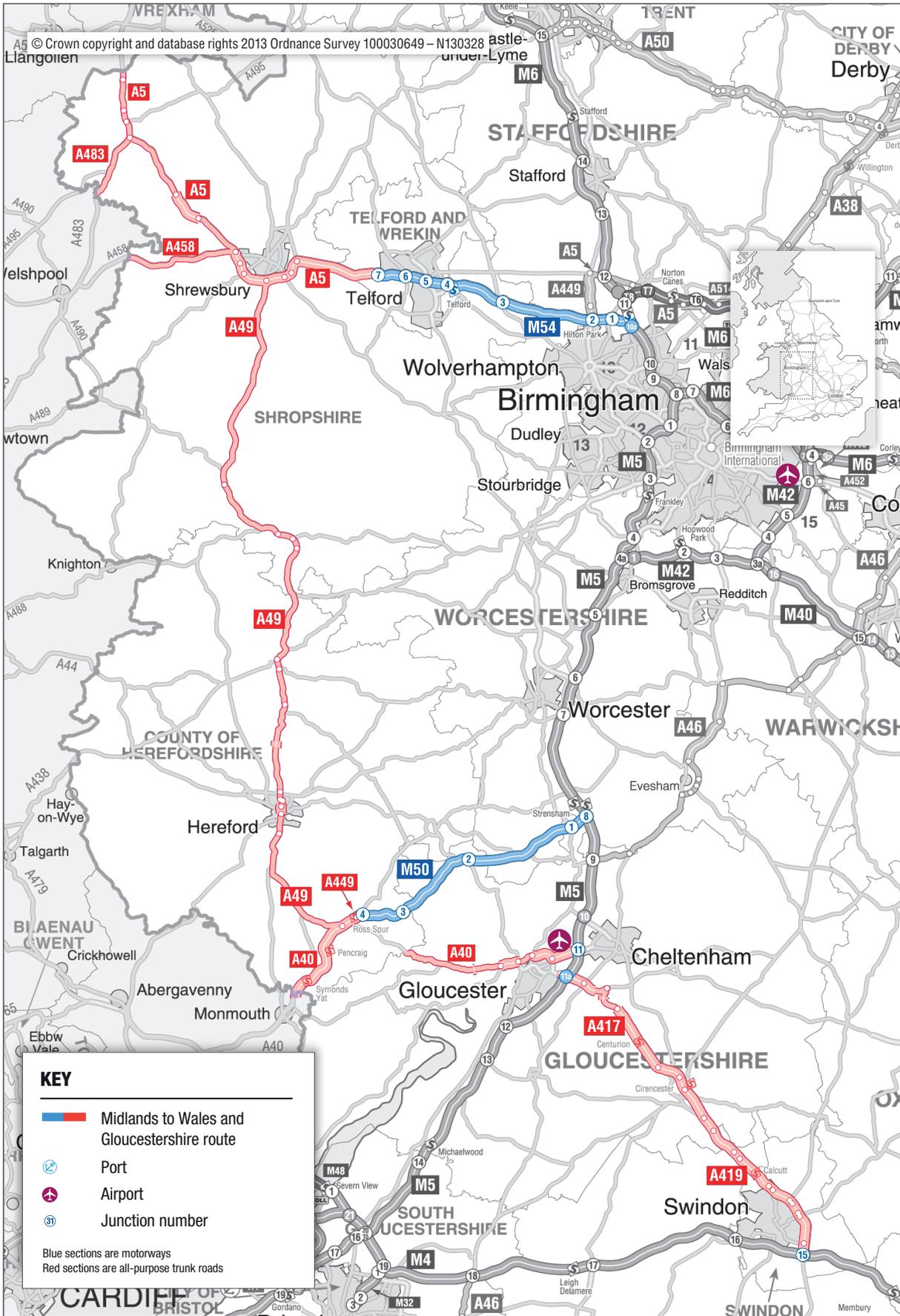


Figure 2.2 - Route Strategy overview map



3. Current constraints and challenges

This chapter outlines the emerging issues raised by stakeholders and is supplemented by Highways England information.

The following text and figures within this chapter provide a summary of the information collected and applied to our strategic themes.



A safe and serviceable network

There are concentrations of safety issues at various points on the route, with some sections being among the worst performing within the SRN.

The A49 is mostly single carriageway with limited overtaking opportunities. Accident records show Hereford to be a collision hotspot and this has been linked to congestion and conflicts between long-distance and local traffic. Level crossings on the A49 in Shropshire are the subject of safety concerns, particularly crossings in Marshbrook, Craven Arms and Orisbury. In order to accommodate an increase in rail demand, rail operators are planning to upgrade the level crossings on and adjacent to the A49. This is likely to require the level crossings being closed while work is undertaken, which could result in temporary traffic congestion.

Concerns also exist regarding the safety of junctions on the route, including the A5/A483 roundabout at Oswestry, the crossroads on the A5 between its junctions with the A458 and A483, the A5/B4397 junction, the A5/B4380 junction and the A44/A49 roundabout north of Leominster.

Currently, there is limited incident management capability on the A49, both in terms of the Traffic Officer Service and roadside technology. On average it takes more than 60 minutes to clear an incident on the A5, the longest time within the route. The lack of technology provision is due to the limited power and telecommunications supply in the predominantly rural locations.

There are various locations along the A417 and A419 that have been highlighted as having poor safety records. There are also safety concerns at junctions on the single carriageway section of the A40, where there are capacity constraints and consequent congestion causes queuing and stacking back at junctions. There are also a number of crossings within the central reservation that increase the risks of collisions.

Operational issues affect parts of this route. The section of the A40 crossing the Severn between Over and Highnam is prone to flooding and there is no planned diversionary route.



More free-flowing network

The majority of the route experiences capacity constraints, which are likely to worsen in future. The congestion issues can be in part attributed to single-width carriageways with limited overtaking opportunities, which is exacerbated by agricultural vehicles using the route and a rise in the number of HGVs.

Capacity constraints are particularly evident on the A49 and the A5, which experience unpredictable journey times due to delays at several junctions and congestion through the busier urban areas of Hereford, Shrewsbury, Leominster and Telford. Journey times in Hereford city centre are worsened by the mix of local and through traffic and the poor resilience caused by the single river crossing.

The most congested sections of the route include the junction of the A49 with the A5 (Bayston Hill roundabout), and delays also occur both on the A5 mainline and at several roundabouts. The A5 route is seeing increased freight movements from west Cheshire and north-east Wales to mid Wales and the west Midlands via the M54, which is contributing to an increase in congestion.

The worst stretch of the A40 for congestion issues is between Longford junction and Over junction to the north of Gloucester. The roundabouts at these junctions experience queuing that is particularly severe during peak periods. The A40 Longford roundabout is a critical point where the A38, which is a major local route, and the A40 intersect, and there is planned strategic growth in this area which will increase the need for capacity improvements at this location. There is also an issue concerning right-turning traffic queuing back onto the A40 at the A40/B4216 junction in Huntley.

The A417 is susceptible to congestion, particularly towards Birdlip, south of the A417/A436 roundabout. The A419 junctions to the north and east of Swindon, such as Blunsdon and the White Hart roundabout, are also prone to congestion.



Supporting economic growth

The current capacity challenges focus on the major towns and cities, which are also key centres for economic growth. These include the M54 around Wolverhampton, the A5 around Shrewsbury and Oswestry, the A49 through Hereford and the A417 and A419 around Swindon and between Cowley and Brockworth.

Approximately 27,500 houses are expected to be built across Shropshire within the 2006–2026 Shropshire Core Strategy timeframe, and more than 16,000 houses are planned in Herefordshire during the 2011–2031 Core Strategy timeframe. These developments will increase traffic on the surrounding road network including the SRN.

There are also plans to create more housing and employment sites in Ross-on-Wye and Hereford. Jobs will be created within the Hereford Enterprise Zone, Skylon Park, a new university and model farm employment site in Ross-on-Wye. It is anticipated that additional road capacity improvements will be required to support the economic growth over the medium to longer term (by 2021).

Hereford Enterprise Zone is important for development in the region but due to the existing congestion problems, there is currently a cap on development next to the SRN until accessibility is improved. Without intervention, economic growth in the area may suffer.

There is planned housing growth in Gloucestershire in the Joint Core Strategy area which, would increase congestion and delay on the A40. Economic growth may also be constrained by congestion to the north of Gloucester on the A40, in addition to a lack of resilience due to limited crossing points of the River Severn, and accessibility to and from the Forest of Dean employment centres.

Developments such as the New Eastern Villages urban extension development on the M4 and A419 will create additional pressure on the Commonhead junction to the south-east of Swindon. This development includes a spine road connecting the A420 to the A419, a new employment area and new housing with associated health, retail, education and leisure facilities.



An improved environment

The route runs through or alongside a number of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Towards the northern section of the route, the A49 runs north–south through the Shropshire Hills, and in the south it runs through the Wye Valley. Towards the south, the M50 runs along the southern edge of the Malvern Hills and the A417 crosses the Cotswolds.

A number of roads that make up this route are predominantly rural with low population density; therefore on roads such as the A5, traffic noise issues are low in comparison to other routes. However, there are Noise Important Areas on the A40 on the outskirts of Gloucester, and noise concerns have been raised in Latton and Cerney Wick on the A419.

There are a number of designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) along the route, including Hereford, Shropshire, Shrewsbury, Gloucester and Leominster. The anticipated increase in congestion on the route may worsen air quality.

The A5 from Oswestry to the Welsh border is located adjacent to, or partly within, a number of conservation designated sites including 4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation, a local nature reserve and ancient and semi-natural woodland.



A more accessible and integrated network

Within the evidence, locations have been identified where walking and cycling are most affected by the SRN. These include the A483, which runs through the centre of the villages of Pant and Llanymynech, and is used by high levels of HGV traffic.

The planned New Eastern Villages urban extension of Swindon will increase traffic on and across the A419, which separates the 2 areas. Measures will be needed to address the severance issues from the A419 for residents of the new housing.

Around Gloucester, the SRN causes issues for non-motorised users. Consultees highlighted a lack of cycling infrastructure along the A40 between Highnam and Churcham, west of the city, and issues with access to the Forest of Dean. There is also a lack of pedestrian facilities between the city centre and housing north of the A40.

Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire - Route Strategy: Map 1 of 2

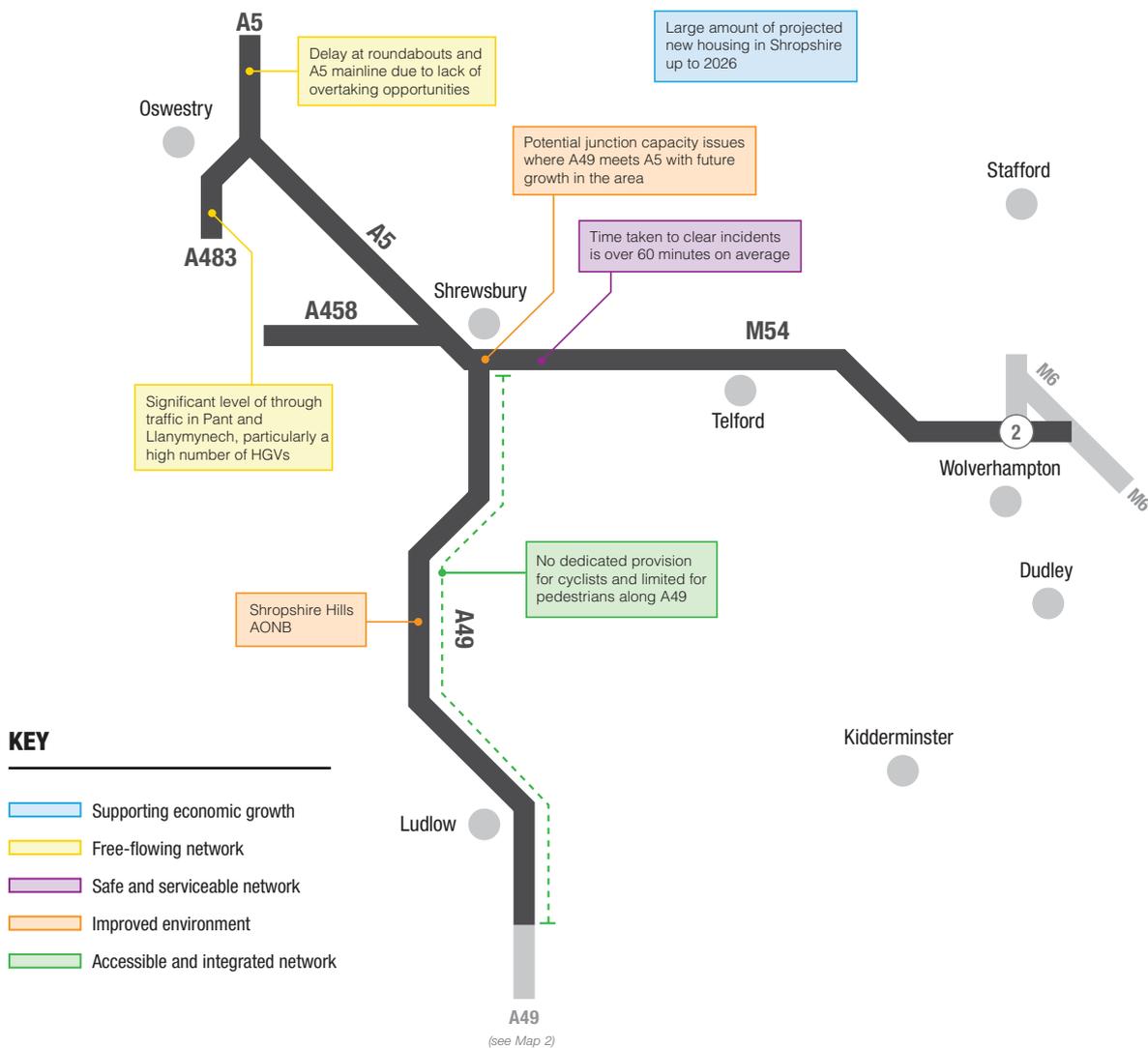


Figure 3.1 - Key challenges for the route

Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire - Route Strategy: Map 2 of 2

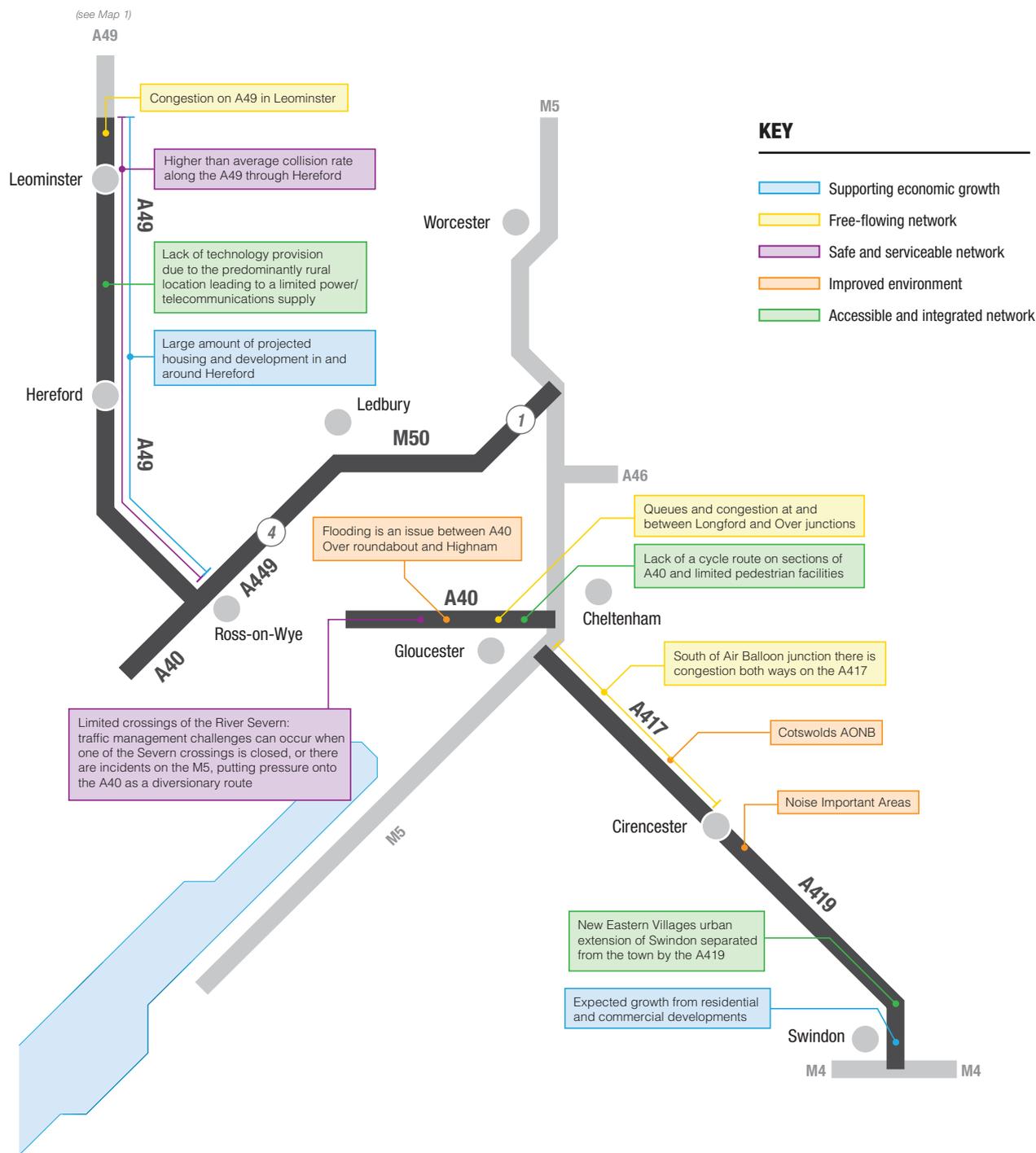


Figure 3.2 - Key challenges for the route

Diversiónary Routes

An essential facet of a resilient road network is the ability to effectively divert traffic away from closed carriageways in the event of an unplanned incident. The map indicates the diversionary routes that currently exist on this route and that have been agreed with the local road network operator. However, it should be noted that the provision of these routes is dependent upon the nature of the incident and the suitability and availability of the surrounding network. In some instances, the diversion route may not be suitable for HGV traffic or might not be available due to events on the local road network. A review is currently underway to improve the quality and coverage of these routes, and to improve the traffic management procedures that are relied upon to implement these routes in the event of a carriageway closure.



Figure 3.3 - Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire diversionary routes

Maintaining the strategic road network

We carry out routine maintenance and renewal of roads, structures and technology to keep the network safe, serviceable and reliable. We also ensure that our contractors deliver a high level of service on the SRN to support operational performance and the long-term integrity of the asset.

The heavy year-round use of all our routes means that they require regular maintenance and inspections for repairs to keep them fully operational, in order to support economic growth. Our maintenance regime focuses on 4 key aspects of the routes: road surfaces, bridges and structures, drainage and earthworks. The summary condition of each on this route is set out below:

Road surface

The surface condition across the route is considered to be sound or having some deterioration with less than 0.5% having severe deterioration that would require focused investigation.

Bridges and structures

The structures across the route are mostly in very good or good condition. According to an analysis of current data, less than 1% of our structures are in poor or very poor condition.

Drainage

Drainage assets are represented by both linear assets (for example pipes, channels, ditches, drains) and non-linear assets (for example gullies, chambers). Across the route, drainage assets are considered to be in good condition for both linear and non-linear assets. Of those assets inspected, at least 75% of both the linear and non-linear assets have been assessed as having no defects or only superficial defects.

Earthworks

The geotechnical earthworks across the route are considered to be in fair condition, with the total length of earthworks that require further investigation amounting to less than 2%.

New assets have an operational 'life', during which, under normal conditions and maintenance, the risk of failure is expected to be low. Beyond this period, the risk of asset failure is expected to increase, although for many types of asset the risk of failure remains low and we do not routinely replace assets solely because they are older than their expected operational life. We use a combination of more regular maintenance and inspection, along with a risk-based approach to ensure that assets remain safe while achieving value for money from our maintenance and renewal activities.



Future developments

We have taken steps to transform our approach to maintenance by establishing an asset management programme that develops and implements the Asset Management Framework for Highways England.

The framework aligns strategic objectives with regional asset management plans and lifecycle asset management plans. It also includes the analysis required to plan the investment and expenditure on the strategic road network during the next road period, developing the business case options for capital renewals. It will provide a clear articulation of the total value that will be delivered by investment in RIS2, including the costs and benefits of delivering the capital renewals programme.

Operations

We are establishing a nationally consistent approach to the management of our operational capability through our Operational Excellence change programme. This will deepen our understanding of how our interventions impact on the performance of the network and on the journeys of our customers. We are using the latest analytical software to process traffic data and gain insight into:

- how our operational services can improve safety and provide security to road users
- how the attendance of a traffic officer has an impact on incident durations
- how information provided by Highways England can benefit road users who plan their journeys beforehand and then while on their journeys

By better understanding our current operational performance, we can create a baseline from which we can identify opportunities for improvement.

4. Current investment plans and growth potential

Investment in the strategic road network can make areas more attractive for inward investment, unlock new sites for employment and housing and facilitate regeneration.

From servicing the UK's logistics needs, linking our manufacturing heartlands and connecting to our international gateways, supporting services-driven activity in high-growth towns and cities, to meeting the needs of our visitor economy, the SRN is critically important to servicing the UK economy.

Economic context

Highways England has been working with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a strategic economic growth plan, which we are calling *The Road to Growth*. This plan explores the economic role of the strategic road network, and aims to explain how we will further increase our contribution to the UK economy. As part of the evidence base for *The Road to Growth*, over 400 economic hotspots – or economic opportunity areas (EOAs) – around the SRN have been identified in consultation with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The figures in this chapter highlight the EOAs which most closely align and are supported by the route.

To inform the development of *The Road to Growth* and assess the relationship between the SRN and economic growth, a suite of evidence reports were completed. These reports were published alongside *The Road to Growth* discussion paper and were subject to public consultation from November 2016 to January 2017. Alongside the engagement we have undertaken with all LEPs across England, the following evidence reports have ensured we have a more comprehensive economic evidence base and a better understanding of future challenges and opportunities:

- economic growth and the SRN – an evidence review of the relationship between transport investment and economic growth

- commercial development – an assessment of the relationship between the main property sectors and the SRN
- international gateways – a review of principal international gateways (ports and airports) and their contribution to the economy
- socio-economic analysis and future forecasts – mapping of socio-economic data (population, deprivation and employment) and sectoral forecasts up to 2030. This included identification of the likely growth forecasts for all sectors with a particular focus on those sectors heavily dependent on the SRN

The Road to Growth sets out our evidence findings to date and the steps we will take to enhance our enabling role in supporting economic growth.

Innovation

In April 2016, we published our Innovation, Technology and Research Strategy which set out how Highways England will use pioneering behaviours to help support our strategic objectives and create value for customers and stakeholders.

The £150 million Innovation Designated Fund was established to support innovative capital projects and to support developing the use of emerging technologies, new materials and ways of working.

Investment plans

The following figures show the location of Highways England major improvement projects which have previously been announced to help tackle some of the issues on the network. The Highways England website and delivery plan updates should be consulted for the latest information.

The figures also show strategic studies which have been progressed during RIS1, innovation projects and economic opportunity areas.

Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire - Route Strategy: Map 1 of 2

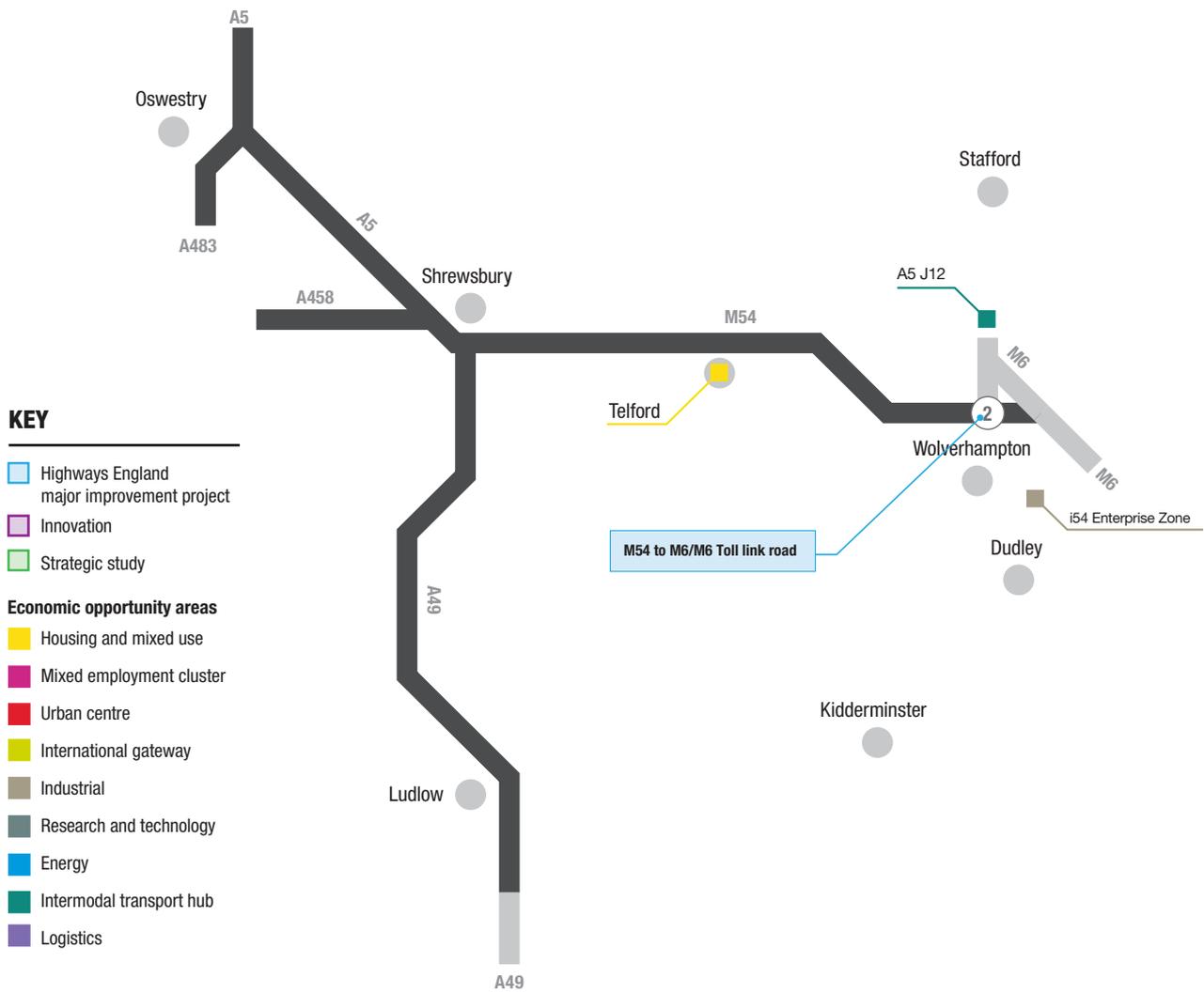


Figure 4.1 - Investment plans and economic opportunity areas

Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire - Route Strategy: Map 2 of 2

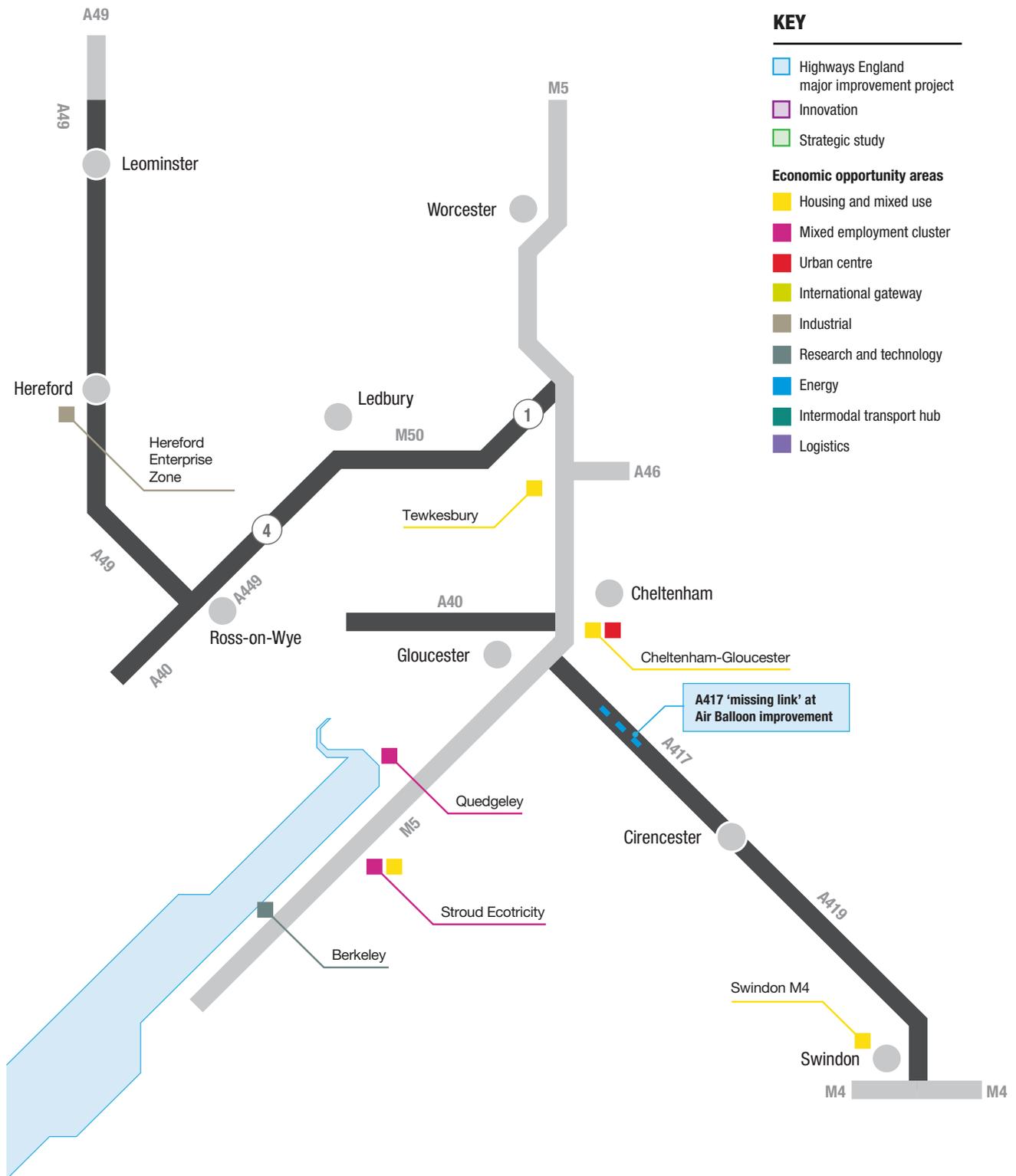


Figure 4.2 - Investment plans and economic opportunity areas



5. Future challenges and opportunities

Route Strategies have identified study areas on the strategic road network which require further investigation of the issues raised by stakeholders and identified through Highways England intelligence. These study areas will now be assessed further as part of our development for RIS2.

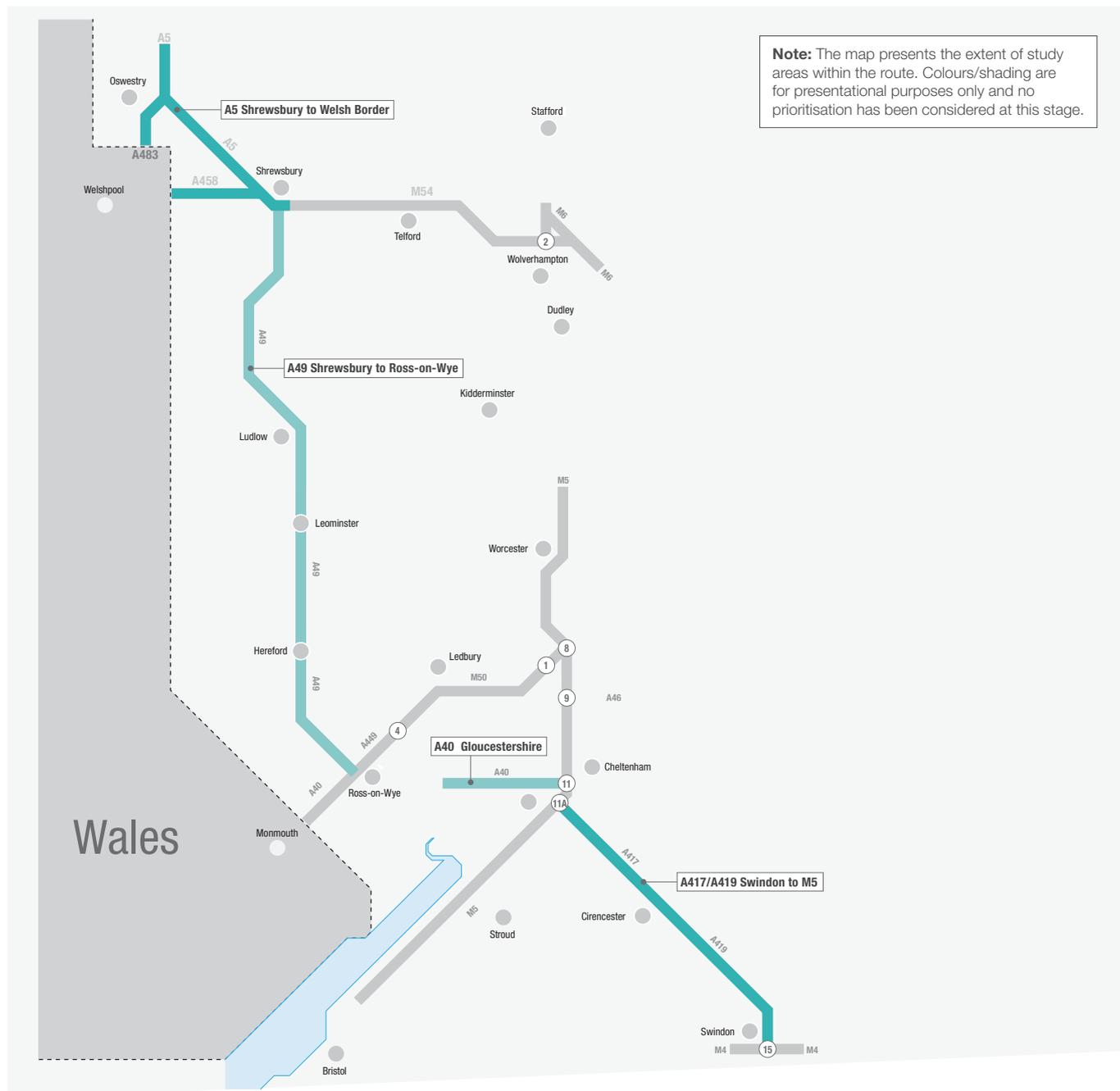
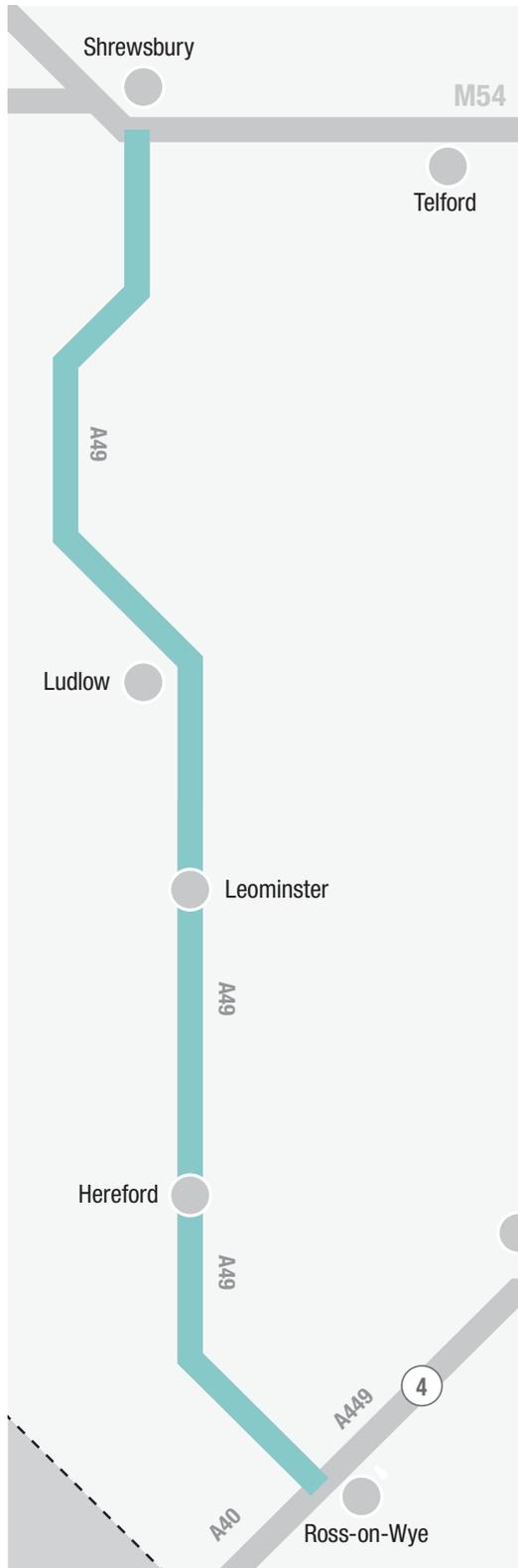


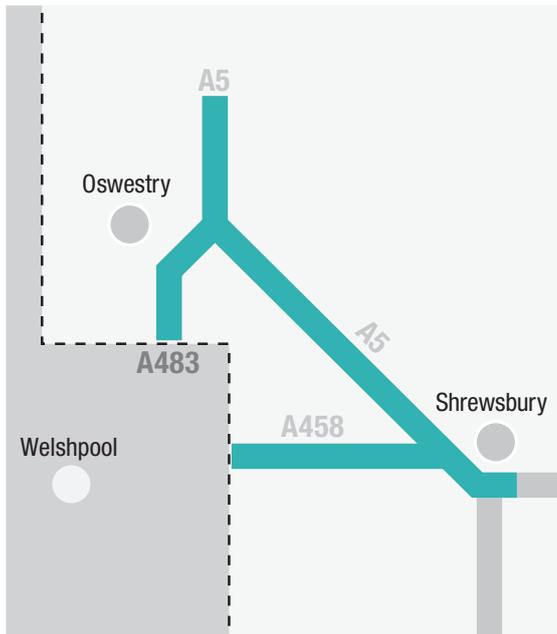
Figure 5.1 - Map of all study areas

A49 Shrewsbury to Ross-on-Wye



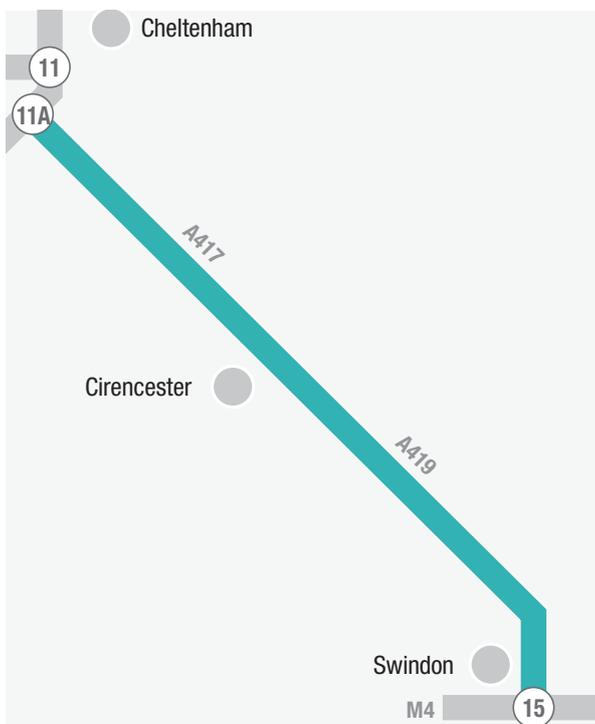
- The A49 forms a key north–south route for local, inter-regional and long-distance traffic and its reliability is key to economic growth in the region, for tourism and for freight transport between north and south Wales.
- Hereford Enterprise Zone is important for development in the region but has existing congestion problems. There is currently a cap on development next to the SRN until accessibility is improved.
- Large amounts of long-distance traffic mixes with local traffic on sections of this route, especially around Hereford.
- There are safety issues on the A49 in Hereford and safety concerns have been raised regarding the level crossings in the corridor.
- A third of the sections that make up this study area are assessed as being among the worst performers in terms of road safety when compared with the rest of the network.
- Increased traffic on the A49 may worsen air quality and noise issues.

A5 Shrewsbury to Welsh Border



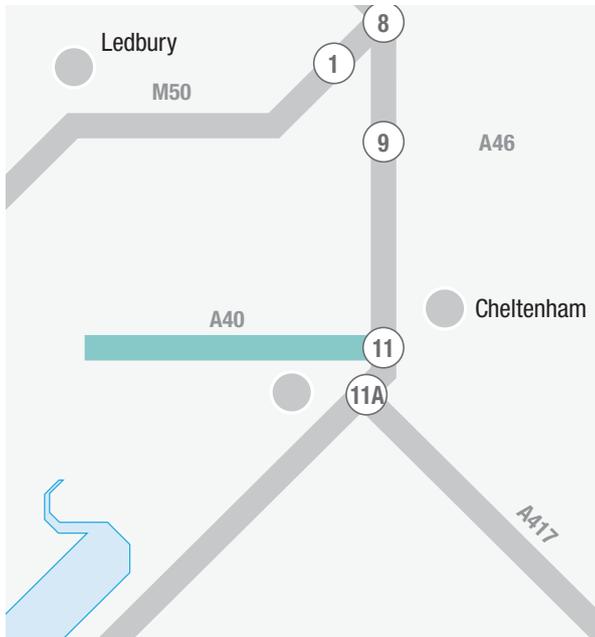
- Congestion across the study area is worsening and the network is potentially reaching capacity. The increased congestion and constrained network may have a negative impact on safety.
- New housing planned within Shropshire, particularly in Shrewsbury and Oswestry.
- The ability to provide effective links to Wales also has a potential impact on economic growth, particularly in the summer with a significant number of tourists travelling through this route.
- There are potential environmental problems at Pant and Llanymynech should congestion and the number of HGVs continue to rise.

A417/A419 Swindon to M5



- Significant economic growth is forecast for Swindon.
- Congestion and delay along the A417 and the A419 is expected to increase.
- Increased congestion may cause traffic to reroute onto narrow local roads.
- There may be a worsening of safety due to the extra traffic.
- There could be an increase in air pollution and noise for homes in close proximity to the route.
- There are severance issues along the A419.

A40 Gloucestershire



- Infrastructure may constrain future development plans for this area.
- Levels of congestion and delay along this section of the A40 will continue to increase, in particular on the areas of single carriageway.
- Increased congestion will cause traffic to reroute onto narrow local roads; this is already occurring with HGVs using B roads.
- In terms of safety, there may be an increase in the number of incidents due to increased traffic.
- Air pollution may worsen, particularly for homes in close proximity to the A40.
- There may be an increase in noise for properties in close proximity to the A40, and the number of areas affected may increase.

6. Next steps

Our findings from this and other Route Strategies, as well as other research, will inform our first Strategic Road Network Initial Report which is to be published later this year. This will form the basis of a public consultation, which in turn will feed into decision-making on the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS2).

We are looking ahead to the next RIS and how we can support the Secretary of State in ensuring that value for money investments are made in the road network. The process for developing RIS2 is set out in our licence, and is in 3 phases: research, decision and mobilisation.

We are currently in the first phase – **research phase** – where we are gathering wide-ranging evidence on the state of the network and how we can ensure that improvements have maximum impact. The series of Route Strategies, of which this is one, is an important part of this phase alongside the outcomes of strategic studies which looked at particularly complicated problems on parts of the network and how to tackle them. Another key source of evidence is the Strategic Economic Growth Plan (*The Road to Growth*), which examines where and how the SRN can help support economic growth. This will emphasise that sectors dependent on the road network employ 7.4 million people, that we are already doing a great deal to support growth and that we want to do even more.

Now that this series of Route Strategies is published, we will continue our engagement with stakeholders, including other transport providers and authorities, on how best to address problems and maximise opportunities. For example, in working towards seamless end-to-end journeys for our customers, we will be focussing on how the strategic road network links with local roads and other modes of transport.

Findings from the research phase will feed into Highways England's Strategic Road Network Initial Report, expected to be published later this year, which will outline Highways England's ambitions for the network across 2020–2025 and beyond. The Initial Report will be the subject of public consultation.

In the **decision phase**, the consultation feedback will assist the Department for Transport in developing RIS2. In turn we will develop a Strategic Business Plan (SBP) setting out how we will deliver RIS2 as a business. Both the RIS and SBP will be reviewed by the regulator of roads, the Office of Rail and Road, to ensure that we have made the most efficient decisions. The final documents are to be published in 2019.

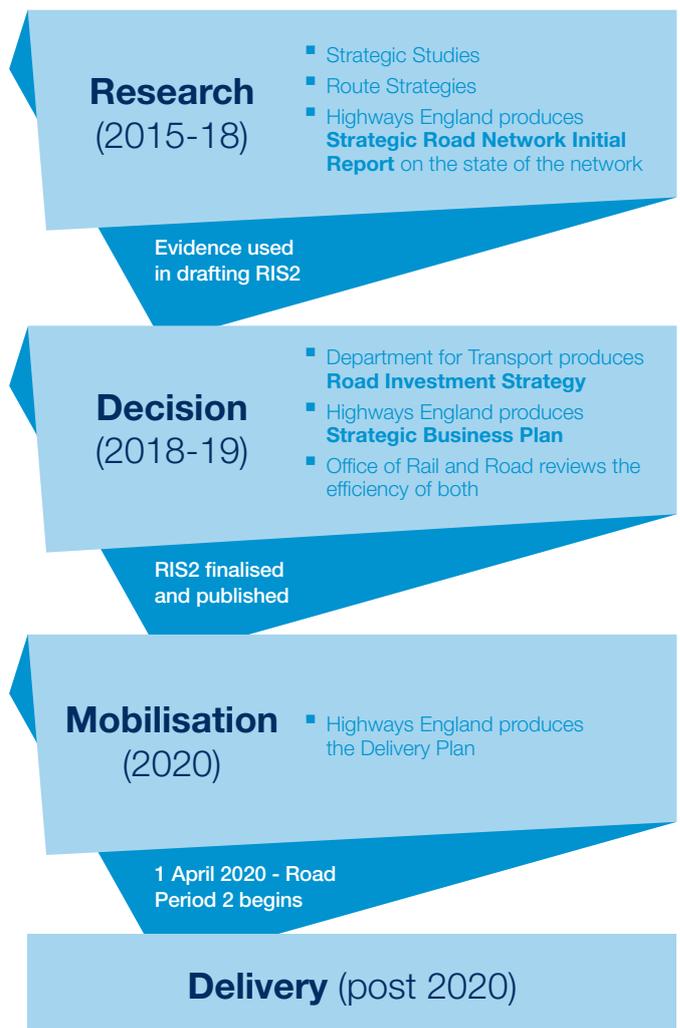


Figure 6.1 - RIS2 high-level process

In the final **mobilisation phase**, we will set out a Delivery Plan with a detailed programme of investment to be carried out in 2020 to 2025 on the basis of the commitments in RIS2.

Continued investment in modernisation, maintenance and operation will further improve the road network on top of the measures and schemes currently being undertaken, and will allow us to further support users of the strategic road network and the UK's economy. The rigorous process of developing RIS2 should ensure that the best use is made of taxpayers' money and that investments have the maximum impact.

The views and perspectives of different stakeholders, including motorists, are important to us. Stakeholders may also wish to contact one of the partner organisations. For example, stakeholders can keep up to date with Transport Focus' work, by signing up to their monthly electronic newsletter *Road User Voice*. Alternatively, stakeholders may prefer to make their views known through one of the many organisations involved in RIS2. They include the AA, RAC, RAC Foundation, Road Haulage Association, Freight Transport Association, Campaign for Better Transport, Confederation of British Industry and many others.

We will provide information about the process and emerging findings at events for representative organisations in spring 2017. At the same time, we are developing the dialogue with emerging STBs, local government, LEPs, business groups and environmental organisations. We want to align our analysis, and eventually our decision-making, with that of other organisations, so that we can maximise the benefit of investment, for example focusing on improving the interconnectivity between different modes and between the strategic and local road networks. This should lead to a richer discussion during public consultation on the Strategic Road Network Initial Report.





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